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Note verbale dated 14 October 2004 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Chairman of the Committee and has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on weapons of mass destruction (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 14 October 2004 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee

[Original: Arabic]

National report of the Syrian Arab Republic pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic views Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as a step in the right direction towards safeguarding international peace and security. Inasmuch as the Syrian Arab Republic is a State that neither possesses nor intends to acquire weapons of mass destruction, its Government has undertaken a series of measures and commitments and signed the international instruments on non-proliferation. The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first countries to sign, by Legislative Decree 169 of 5 August 1969, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Its accession to the Treaty stemmed from its desire to ensure transparency in this field and its conviction that the possession of such destructive weapons by any State in the Middle East or their falling into the hands of some States and not others or of terrorist non-governmental bodies represented an enormous threat and source of anxiety to the peoples of the region and the world. Indeed, it considers the NPT as the indispensable basis for continuing disarmament. The fact that the NPT has a greater number of States parties than any other treaty on the subject is due simply to the belief of those States in its importance for averting the spectre of nuclear war. To demonstrate its good intentions and in the interest of transparency, as early as 1992 the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic signed with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, under which a national system for accounting and monitoring of the movement of nuclear materials was established.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its commitment to the international resolutions and instruments and the legislation and procedures in force for exchanging information and ensuring coordination among the activities undertaken at all levels, whether national, subregional, regional or international, for dealing with the nuclear threat. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has entrusted the responsibility for implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) to the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Department of International Organizations and Conferences in coordination with all national authorities concerned in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the required national report has been prepared accordingly.

As a follow-up to earlier initiatives presented by the Syrian Arab Republic to the international community with a view to strengthening and upholding the concept of international peace and security, in April 2003 Syria submitted to the Security Council, in New York, on behalf of the Arab Group, an initiative for ridding the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Syria declared before the international community that it would contribute effectively, together with its Arab brothers and the world's other peace-loving countries, towards making the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, however, international conditions at the time and the positions of certain influential States in the Security Council did not favour the

success of that initiative. In December 2003 the Syrian Arab Republic again proposed before the Security Council the same initiative, which but it was met with threats of the use of the veto against it and remained before the Security Council "in blue", awaiting more favourable international conditions for its adoption.

Shortly before the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic proceeded to adopt a number of measures for regulating the handling of chemical and biological materials employed in various peaceful applications with a view to preventing their falling into the hands of non-governmental bodies. The competent Syrian authorities established national legislation on the sound management of chemicals and strove to develop all national standards relating to the permissible maximum limits for the concentration of chemical substances in the environment. They also established a timetable for reducing the release of chemicals and hazardous wastes into the environment, work on which is expected to be completed by the end of 2005. As early as 1994 a national centre was established for the purpose of furnishing needed information regarding preventive measures required in connection with the handling of chemical and biological substances used in medicine, industry and agriculture. It should be mentioned that the Syrian Arab Republic signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction in 1972, in addition to being a party to most of the conventions on the management of chemicals and hazardous waste, including the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (since 1992), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (since 2002) and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (since 2003). All these instruments relate to the prohibition of the production of and trade in chemical substances and hazardous wastes known for their toxic properties, their resistance to decomposition, their biological accumulation, their transboundary movements over considerable distances via the air and water and by various kinds of migration. They form an integrated legal framework for the integral management of chemicals and hazardous wastes. In 2002 the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic implemented the national chemical safety plan, which involved the adoption of an action plan for improving the management of chemical substances in Syria by means of a number of measures, including the following:

- Adoption of a uniform definition and classification of chemicals in common use in Syria for the years 2003 and 2004;
- Establishment of a schedule of chemicals prohibited and restricted in Syria;
- Issuance of a technical guide for the sound management of chemical waste at the beginning of 2003;
- Preparation of inventory lists of hazardous wastes resulting from various activities in mid-2003 to 2006;
- Establishment of a national database on the management of chemicals and a network for information exchange among the relevant organizations, to permit the exchange of data and information.

In 1987 the Syrian Arab Republic, desiring to combat illegal traffic in radioactive substances, established, at all its land, sea and air entry/exit points,

specialized border stations to monitor movements of nuclear and radioactive materials in accordance with national rules, legislation and regulations, which have the force of law and are based on the international norms and regulations issued by IAEA, particularly in respect of the system of reporting, registering, licensing and monitoring all radioactive and nuclear materials and equipment arriving in and exiting from the Syrian Arab Republic and used for peaceful purposes.

The competent authorities in the Syrian Arab Republic are now considering the possibility of availing themselves of the provisions of paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

In respect of violators, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic applies harsh penalties ranging from a term of imprisonment to a monetary fine, the duration or amount of which, respectively, is determined in accordance with national regulations and the rules provided in local legislation, especially with regard to dealing illegally with any and all types of weapons without official licences issued beforehand by the approved governmental agencies. Such licences cover all aspects of such dealing, including import, export, trading, production, distribution, transport, transit, repair, bearing and possession (Act No. 51 of 2001, the Arms Act).

The competent authorities in the Syrian Arab Republic are currently engaged in the development of a special law code that will cover all questions of safety and security of nuclear and radioactive sources. The code is expected to be finalized in the near future.

The Syrian Arab Republic is still of the opinion — within the framework of the final document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, wherein the Secretary-General of the United Nations is called upon to follow a specific mechanism reflecting anxiety and concerns over the current situation in the Middle East — that intensive efforts must be made for the establishment and implementation of that mechanism in order to draw the attention of the international community to the fact that Israel is the only country in the region that possesses a nuclear military arsenal, refuses to accede to the NPT and refuses to subject all its installations to international inspection under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system. Indeed, the existence of those installations outside any international monitoring threatens the region with an environmental disaster as a result of radiation leaks to which they might give rise. Such is the case of the Dimona reactor, as reported by the Israeli media themselves and as stated by Israeli nuclear expert Mordechai Vanunu regarding possible deadly radiation leaks from the Dimona reactor owing to cracks that have occurred in it. This danger has been corroborated by the recent distribution of iodine pills by the competent Israeli authorities to the population resident within 30 kilometres of the Dimona reactor and to hotels overlooking the shores of the Dead Sea.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic adheres scrupulously to all its international commitments and agreements regarding such matters and is moving forward with the development and enhancement of its national monitoring and regulation programmes. Syria is participating actively in the review of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials and strives for continued enhancement of its national legislative frameworks in that field. It has undertaken with IAEA to apply the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of

Radioactive Sources, actively contributing, together with the panel of experts, to the establishment of guidelines for the import and export of radioactive sources.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the international community to take pains to avoid a policy that is selective or based on double standards in questions relating to terrorism and the right of peoples to struggle against foreign occupation and encourages it to look with interest at the legitimate concern and growing apprehensions of the peoples of the region in the face of an Israeli nuclear military capacity that prevents regional and international peace and security from prevailing and undermines the building of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

National report issued in October 2004.